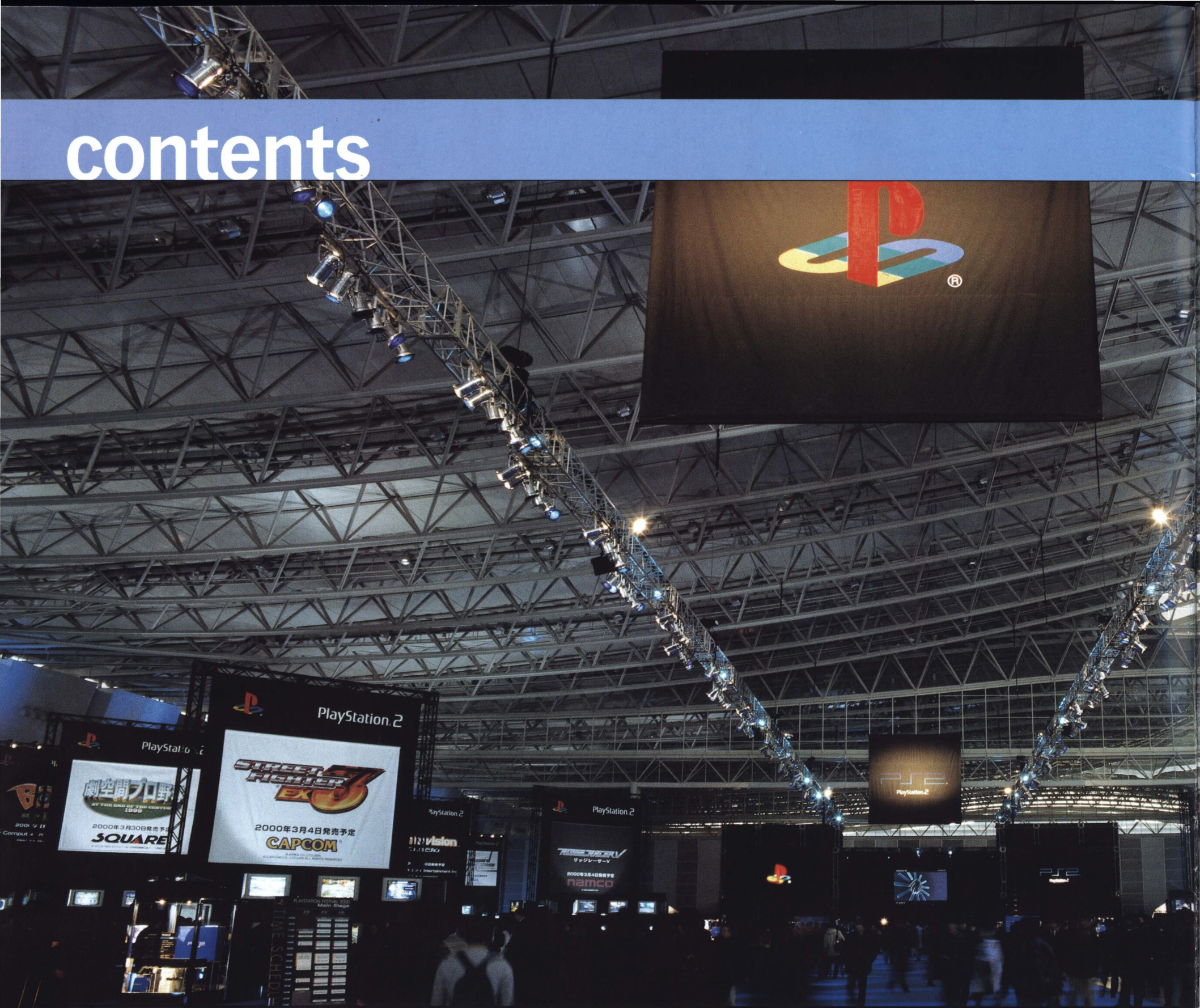


EDGE®

PlayStation2: the verdict – hit or hype?



contents



Editorial

Future Publishing
30 Monmouth Street
Bath, BANES, BA1 2BW
Telephone: 01225 442244
Fax: 01225 732275
Email: edge@futurenet.co.uk
Edge Web site: www.edge-online.com
Advertising and recruitment:
emma.lewis@futurenet.co.uk

Subscriptions

Future Publishing Ltd
FREEPOST BS4900, Somerton
Somerset TA11 6BR
Telephone customer services:
01458 271112
Telephone customer order line:
01458 271112
Fax: 01225 822523
Email: subs@futurenet.co.uk

People on Edge

Tony Mott editor
João Sanches deputy editor
Alex Mors operations editor
Mark Walbank writer
Christophe Kagotani Tokyo bureau
Terry Stokes art editor
Darren Phillips deputy art editor
Emma Lewis advertising manager
Neil Abraham business dev manager

Rob Silverman classified advertising
Advertising fax 0171 317 2604
Philip Harrison production coordinator
Lou Reffell production manager
Production fax 01225 732293
Caroline Coles ad design
Beccy Stables print services coordinator
Judith Green group production manager
Rachel Spurrier pre-press coordinator

Simon Windsor, Mark Gover,
Chris Power foreign licensing
Jackie Garford publisher
Rob Price group publisher
Jane Ingham managing director
Greg Ingham chief executive

Colour reproduction

Phoenix Repro, Bath

Print

Cradley Print, Warley, West Midlands
Edge is printed on Royal Press 90gsm

Production of Edge

Hardware Power Macintosh,
G3, G4, iBook, iMac, Quadra by Apple
Software
QuarkXPress, Adobe Photoshop, Macromedia
FreeHand, Pixar Typestry and Nisus Writer
Typography (Adobe®)
Format light/regular/medium/bold
Vectora light/bold/black Base125ans/ bold/BBIT



Edge recognises all copyrights in this issue. Where possible, we have acknowledged the copyright holder. Contact us if we have failed to credit your copyright and we will be happy to correct any oversight.

EDGE is the registered trade mark of Edge Interactive Media Inc. Used under licence.

Future Publishing Ltd is part of The Future Network plc.

The Future Network plc serves the information needs of groups of people who share a passion. We aim to satisfy their passion by creating magazines and Web sites that offer superb value for money, trustworthy information, multiple ways to save time and money, and are a pleasure to read or visit. This simple strategy has helped create one of the fastest-growing media companies in the world: we publish more than 115 magazines, 20 magazine Web sites and a number of Web networks from offices in five countries. The company also licenses 42 magazines in 30 countries.

The Future Network is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange.



Media with Passion
Bath London Milan Munich
New York Paris San Francisco



Printed in the UK
© Future Publishing 2000

ABC (Audit Bureau of Circulation)

Twenty-seven PlayStation2 titles made an appearance in playable form at the recent PlayStation Festival 2000 event in Tokyo. Of this number, however, only four could be termed next-generation products. And of that elitist quartet, only one title offered a glimpse of the quality of videogaming's future as plotted out by Sony.

Anyone shocked by this hasn't been paying attention for the last 12 months. Simply put, the first wave of PS2 titles was never going to turn the videogame industry on its head. Talk of emotional game content may make good copy, but in real terms it's at least a generation or two away. Right now, it looks like a case of all hands on deck as PS1 franchises undergo swift aesthetic makeovers while copycat concepts spring up to fill the gaps in between. Because of this, the original titles that *have* made it into the PS2's early software schedule demanded extra attention in Tokyo.

But the surprise of innovative software at the event was perhaps overshadowed by another revelation: a lack of enthusiasm from the relatively small crowds in attendance. To the casual observer at the show it may well have seemed that Japan's love affair with videogames is finally coming to an end.

But the casual observer's opinion is worth nought. The Japanese public is not about to ditch its favourite pastime, but its passion needs reigniting, and in this supplement **Edge** reports on the games that set out to do just that.



Gran Turismo 2000	04
Ridge Racer V	06
Driving Emotion Type-S	08
Dark Cloud	10
Street Fighter EX3	12
Tekken Tag Tournament	14
Fantavision	16
Be On Edge	18
Onimusha	20
Kessen	21
Evergrace	22
Eternal Ring	23
IQ Remix +	24
Gekikokan Pro Baseball	25
Round-up	26

Gran Turismo 2000

Publisher: SCEI
Developer: Polyphony Digital
Release: Summer

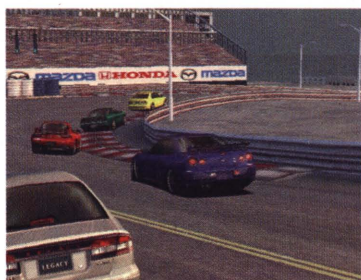
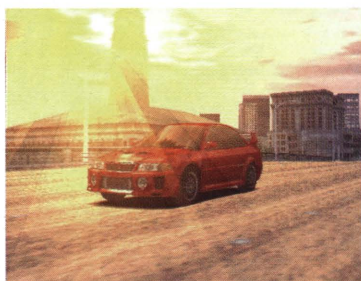
Before *Gran Turismo 3* arrives and inevitably sets a new standard within the racing game genre, *GT2000* aims to convert any remaining non-believers to the cause

Without doubt the most technically impressive playable PS2 title at the show, *GT2000* matched its astounding visuals with the most intuitive, most rewarding racing game control Edge has had the pleasure to experience.

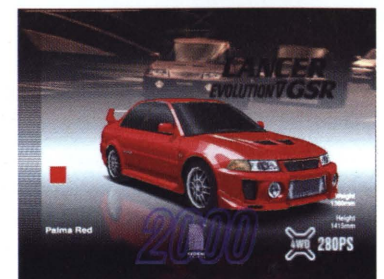
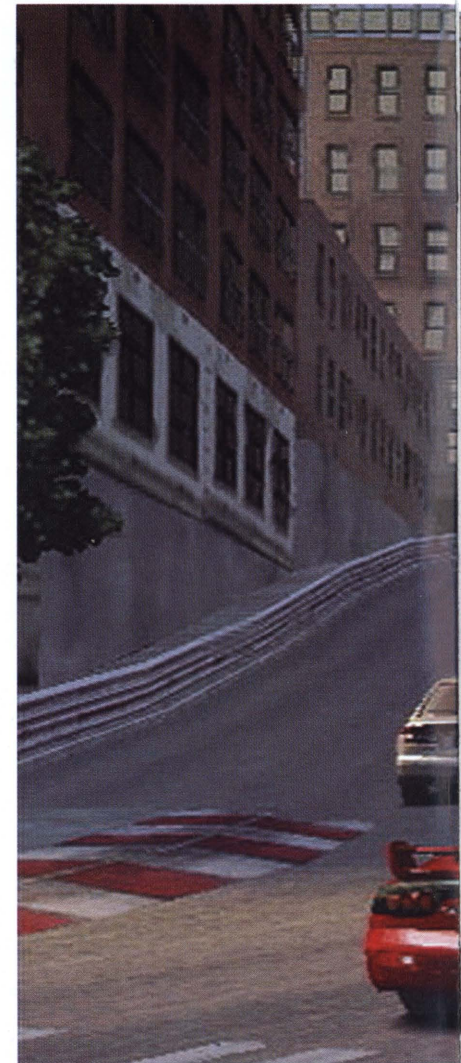
Ignore the underlying technology for a moment and concentrate on blasting around one of the final corners of the demo's Seattle track, bathed in one of the most glorious sun flare effects ever seen in digital form. You'll notice the sky is one of the richest ever seen in a videogame. Then watch the replay. Marvel at how beautifully detailed vehicles negotiate the various bends, how realistic smoke issues from skidding tyres and how the dazzling heat haze effect comes into play on long-distance shots. The realtime environment mapping also stands out.

And just when you think you have a taste of what the finished game will be like, along comes Kazunori Yamauchi, the game's producer, and casually informs you that this is still only 20 per cent of what he plans to achieve. He goes on to explain that each vehicle is currently made up of 4,500 polygons and takes a week to model.

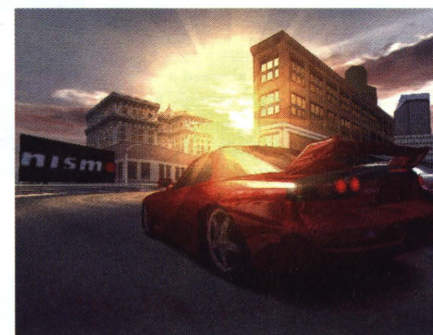
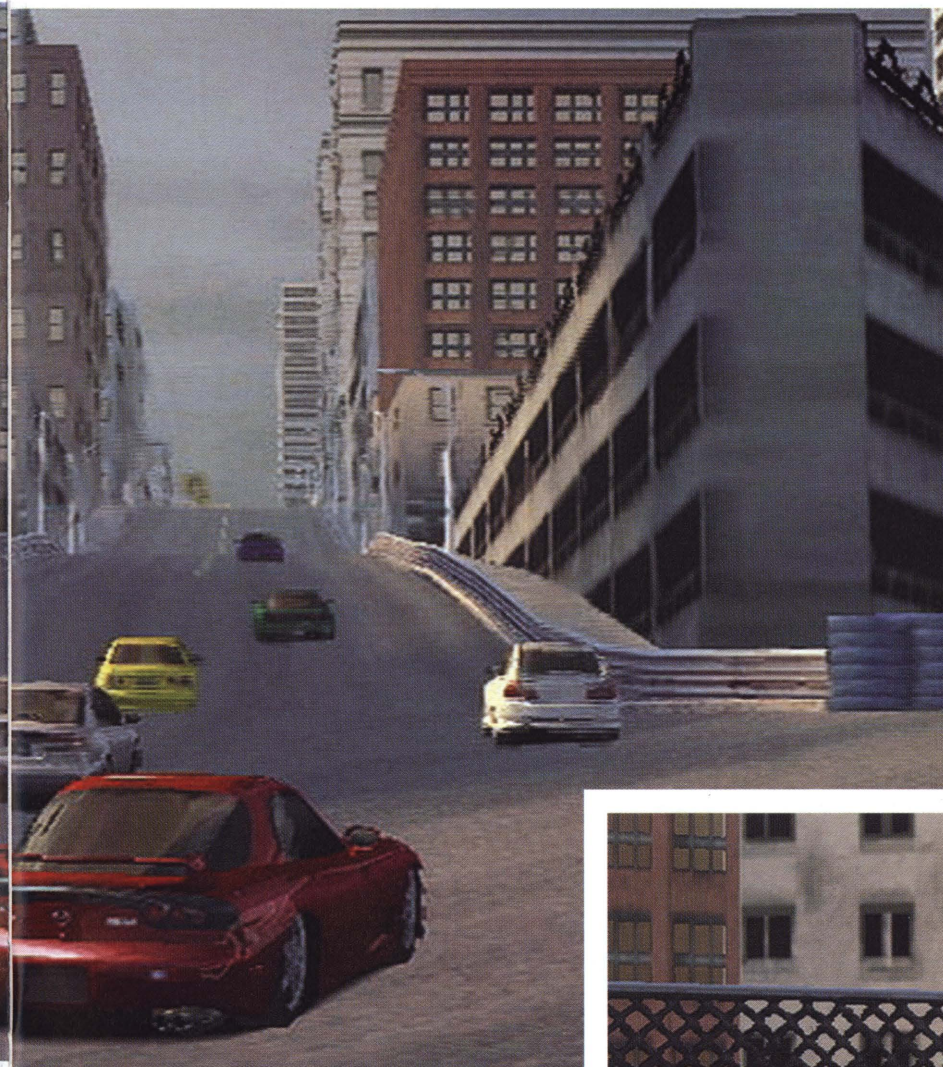
GT's rendering engine (in third-generation guise) is at present running 2m polys in unoptimised form, but is capable of five times that amount. A fourplayer splitscreen mode is under consideration, opponent AI is to be improved, and *Omega Boost* and *Motor Toon GP* are included as bonus games. Whether everything makes the final version remains to be seen – even Yamauchi-san admitted that due to strict scheduling *GT2000* will include less tracks than *GT2* (they will be different, though). If nothing else it gives you a good idea of what to expect for *GT3*. Yes, it's in the works.



The Festival demo offered the same Seattle track and Mitsubishi Lancer Evo V combination as last September's TGS. This time, though, it had a 120-second limit, analogue button use (accelerator and brakes) and visual trimmings



Cars are made up of 4,500 polys. Even if you had only one of these on a simplistic track, you wouldn't be able to get a PlayStation1 to handle its display



The constant 60fps update results in the suspension model working twice as fast as *GT2*'s. That gives an increase in understeer but also provides better tyre performance. Cars react more intuitively to control input, making the whole thing feel utterly and wonderfully right. Vehicles now jump and land far more squarely on their wheels. New effects such as solar flare and tyre smoke are supremely implemented. This is true next-generation gaming

Ridge Racer V

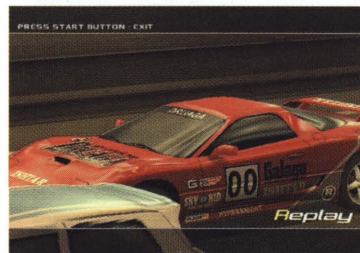
Publisher: **Namco**
Developer: **In-house**
Release: **Out now**

Like its predecessor, the second PlayStation is launching alongside a version of Namco's finest racer. And like the original *Ridge*, this fifth instalment is a flash beast

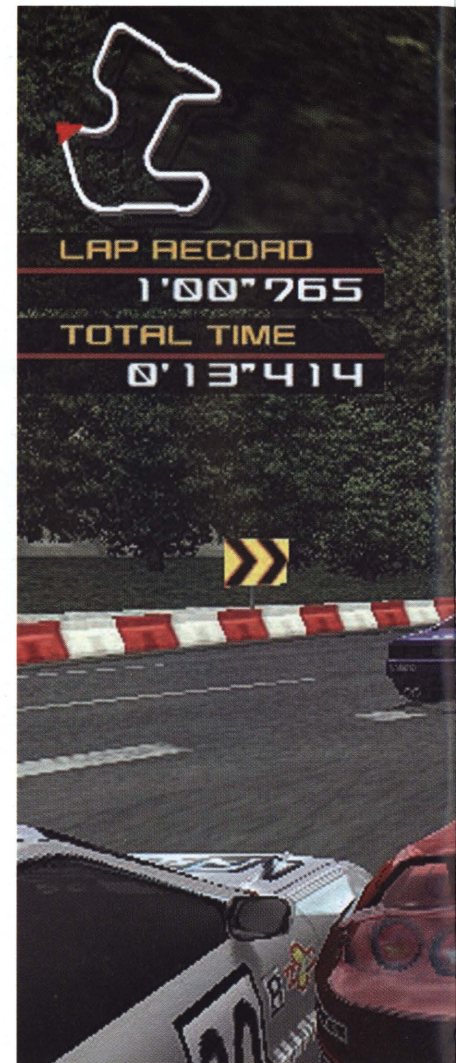
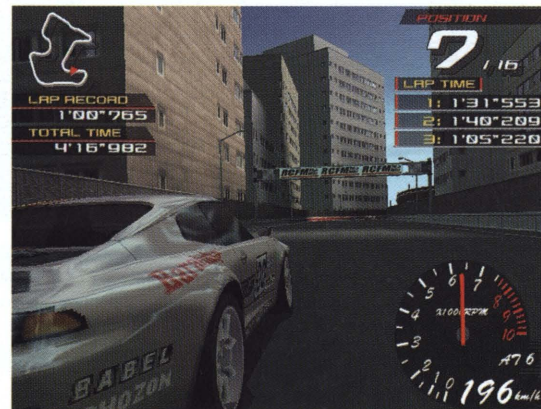
The first Namco-developed PlayStation2 project is currently one of the few titles offering a glimpse into the 128bit machine's real power. It certainly proved popular with the crowds at the PlayStation Festival. Unsurprisingly, there are no radical departures from the *Ridge* family – the handling certainly delivers the usual levels of accessibility associated with the series. If anything, powersliding your way around the one-track demo felt particularly intuitive and wonderfully rewarding. In other words, typical *Ridge Racer* fare.

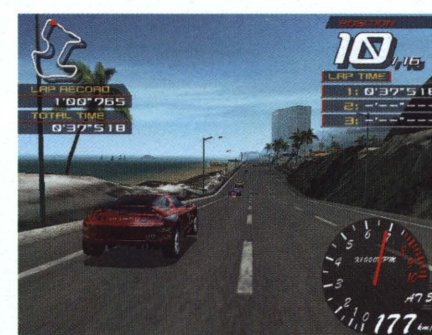
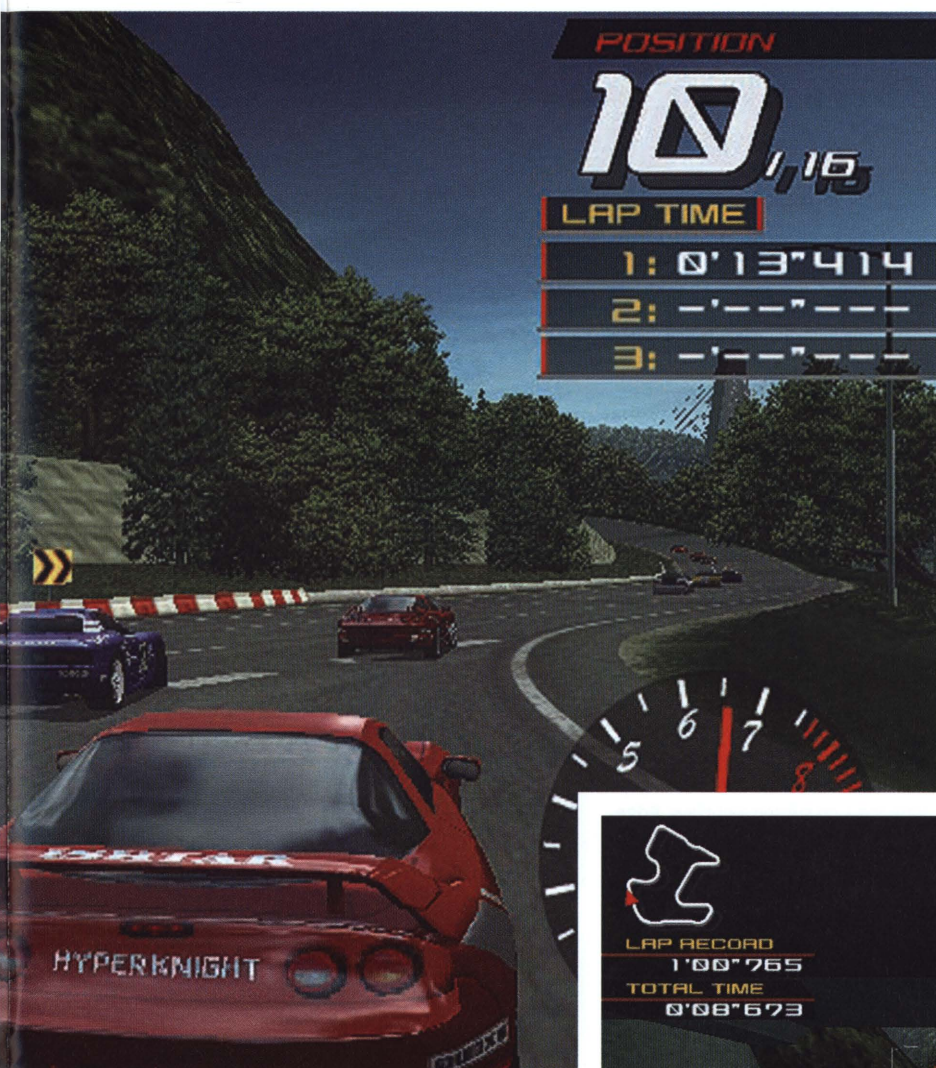
Graphically, things look obsessively sharp and clean. Draw distance is remarkable, with little pop-up evident; when combined with the skyscraper-laden surroundings, it conspires to deliver a wonderfully solid environment. Use of lighting is masterful and effects such as sparks continue to impress. If a criticism remains, it's that the car bodykits are not as detailed as they could be – certainly not as complex as *GT2000*'s.

The usual Grand Prix is joined by a Duel mode (where you race against a CPU opponent whose car you win if you are victorious), a two-player game, time attack and a free run option allows you to practice. Additional bonus modes are also promised.



Use of lighting is one of *Ridge V*'s strengths. The show demo allowed a choice of day, dusk or night settings. It also impresses on graphical aptitude – the environment feels wonderfully solid – and playability. Not surprising, with its heritage





Unlike previous Ridge games, this time more than just one or two cars can be seen on the track at the same time. And the illusion of wheels touching the road surface (as opposed to floating above it) is a vast improvement over RRV's previous appearance at last year's Tokyo Game Show

Driving Emotion Type-S

Publisher: Square
Developer: In-house
Release: Out now

A rather fine entry into the serious driving videogame market from a company whose last racing venture featured a bunch of Chocobos struggling to reach the finish line



Type-S mixes fictitious international tracks with renowned venues such as Japan's Suzuka circuit. Similarly, the car selection has a cosmopolitan feel



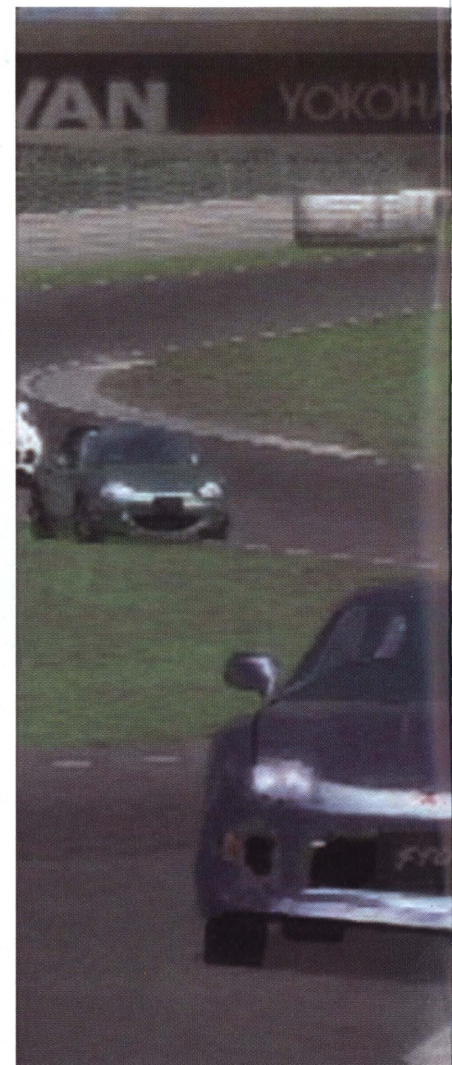
One of the few titles at the Festival with extensive play options, Square's racer had six playable tracks (two Japanese circuits, the rest a mixture of fictitious national and Euro inspired offerings), and plenty of manufacturers with a minimum of two cars each.

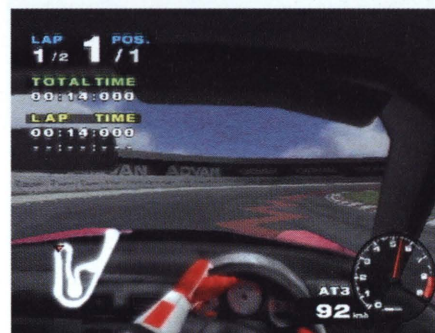
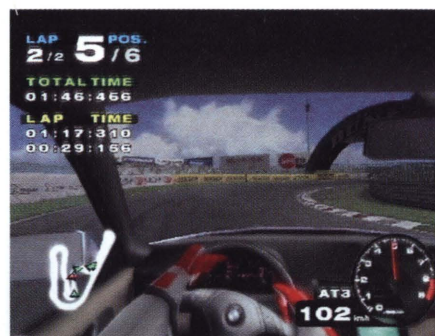
Edge wasted little time in jumping into a Ferrari F360 Modena and throwing it around Suzuka's finest bends. The controls are particularly odd, yet strangely addictive. Everyone, bar a frighteningly talented five-year-old, struggled to keep their cars on straight lines, let alone on the track. The trick is not to overcompensate control input, particularly at low speeds.

By allowing a longer time for direction changes than is usual in other games – offering in effect a more realistic approach – there's little excuse not to beat the CPU competition. It takes a couple of laps to get used to; *Type-S* is forgiving – on subsequent plays, Edge was powersliding Tommi Makinen's Lancer VI WRC and a Ferrari F50 around wide open curves in a night time Tokyo highway level with remarkable ease.

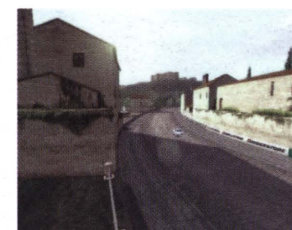
Visual effects, such as mist and tyre smoke, are beautifully realised, but flat shading on cars hardly helps their plain demeanour. Of the show's three racers, this shows the most limited draw distance, with the end of most straights missing scenery until you get closer. However, the game maintains a 60fps update, even in the fine twoplayer mode.

Subtle detail such as internal reflections on the windscreen is included, while CPU cars fail to get it right all of the time. And although the licence restricts visible damage, at least car flipping is possible.





Flat shading does little to flatter the already disappointingly simple vehicle models. At least you get to roll them



The replay camera loves to show off by insisting on panning in from remote areas, far away from the track action. Ironically, of the three PS2 racing games shown this is the most graphically inferior, displaying the weakest draw distance. But few expected Square to cut the mustard with a driving game, and the company has proved cynics wrong

Dark Cloud

Publisher: SCEI
Developer: In-house
Release: Autumn

The more *Dark Cloud* is shown, the more astounding it looks. On current form, it's difficult to see how Sony's game can fail in its quest to revolutionise action RPGs




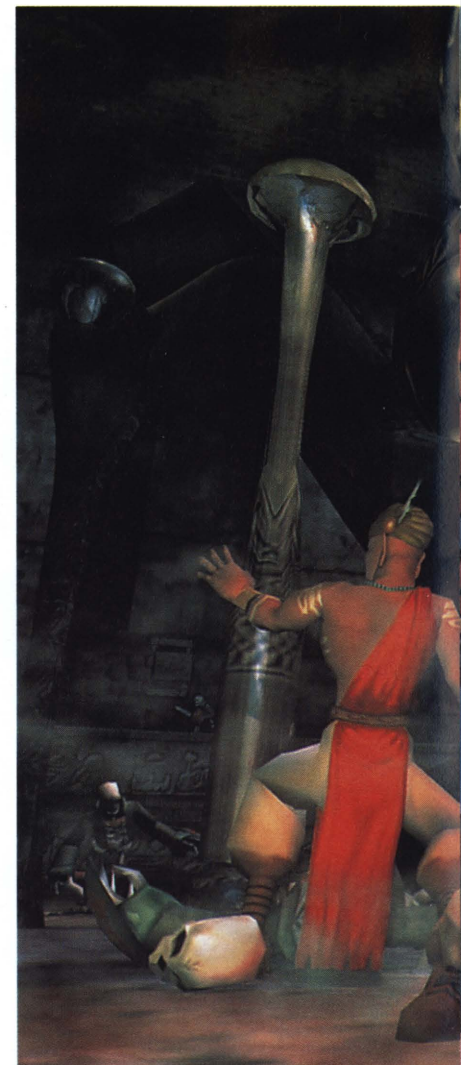
While no details of plot exist, expect nothing radically different from the usual action-RPG narrative. But an inspired denouement would surely elevate *DC* to instant must-have status

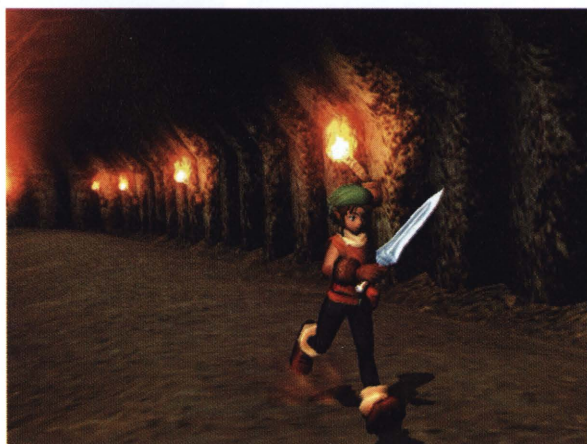
This continues to be one of Edge's most-anticipated PS2 releases. Shown at the PlayStation Festival by a member of its development team, *Dark Cloud* has evolved no small amount since it debuted at September's TGS. The lead character has been altered (now benefiting from elongation), and audio accompaniment has undergone something of a remix.

Increasingly viewed as Sony's answer to *Zelda*, complete with similarly styled treasure chests, this looks stunning with its astounding visuals featuring excellent lighting touches. Cinematic cut scenes feature throughout, the sun sets and rises, the animation is constantly first rate, the settings beautiful and the environment appears utterly solid.

Intriguingly, some of the combat is *Parappa the Rapper* inspired, with a series of button icons arranged in sequence, requiring you to match them with corresponding button presses.

The feature allowing you to build villages, forests and other elements is still available and remains as impressive as ever – the change from the top-down planning view back to the game is done seamlessly in a second. How this will feature during the actual game still has most people scratching their heads. Regardless, *Dark Cloud* is among the PS2's most gorgeous titles. 





If ever there was a title whose appearance in static screenshot form does not do it justice, surely this is it. In motion *Dark Cloud* comes alive, creating one of the most endearing fantasy worlds ever seen in a game

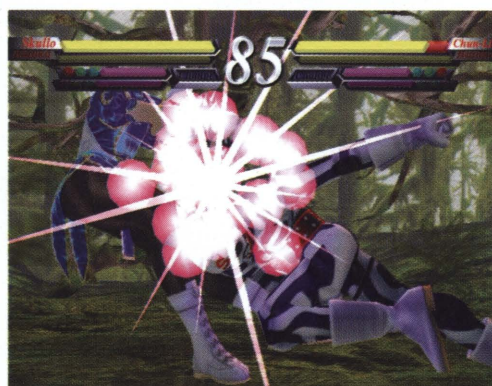
Street Fighter EX3

Publisher: **Capcom**
Developer: **Arika**
Release: **Out now**

Better than *Tekken Tag Tournament*? Judging by the show's crowds it's something of a close call. But **Edge's** brawlers certainly found the vitality in Arika's title more appealing



The finished game offers the usual vibrant mixture of varied backgrounds and contrasting colours. Sadly, Capcom was not able to provide final shots for inclusion in this supplement

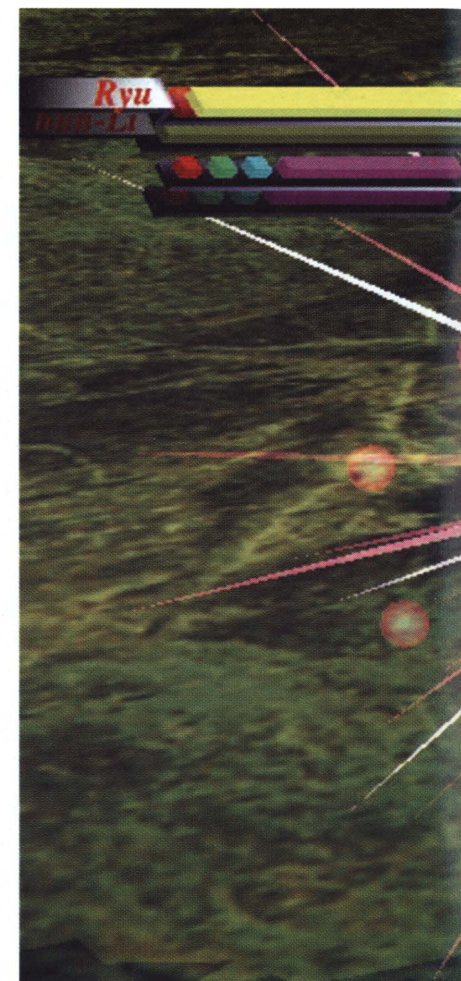


Previous Arika SF games have been developed first for coin-op before being brought to the home. This, the first console-original EX title, disappointed some Festival-goers with occasionally pixellated visuals, but it's likely that this was down to monitor settings than the game's inherent quality.

EX3 delivers the impact of the SF series in a most convincing manner. As befits the SF name, the action is relentless, the visual effects beautiful, and fluid play is assured. The oneplayer demo mode followed an intriguing structure: your initial combat saw you facing three CPU opponents with just one character (Dramatic Battle), before progressing to two-on-two action (Tag Battle) and finally going up against a boss character.

It certainly brought variety to the proceedings. Expect the finished game to offer more than just three battles per play. In fact, one game option requires you to develop a character into a master fighter by getting him to learn new moves and increase his strength fight after fight. A great twoplayer versus option was also available, but unfortunately none of the demo units offered a multitap connection enabling access to the game's fourplayer mode.

Control is immediately familiar to anyone versed in any of the SF games, with special moves and combos delivered via the usual button combination. The Dual Shock 2 may not be as intuitive to play with as an arcade stick (or the SNES joypad), but it does a reasonable job of ensuring play is mostly unaffected. During combat, the camera constantly zooms in and out, depending on the characters' position as well as breaking away from its side-locked view during special moves and adopting a more dramatic,



3D-like position. It's an effective touch.

In several ways the game proved more exciting than *Tekken Tag Tournament*. On initial appraisal it appears to offer more vitality than Namco's brawler. It may not be as easily accessible to beginners in the way the latter is, but SF heads will have no problem porting their EX skill across. As beautifully demonstrated by the nimble-fingered eight-year-old who sent one of **Edge's** staffers to the back of the queue, in fact.





The camera continuously zooms in and out, keeping the heart of the action constantly in view (above, top). While veteran *EX* players should find the transition effortless, newcomers to the series may find this version's myriad nuances a tad intimidating



Tekken Tag Tournament

Publisher: **Namco**
Developer: **In-house**
Release: **March 30**

It looks like *Tekken*. It feels like *Tekken*. And it plays like... *Tekken*. Hardened series fans will welcome it with broken arms. Others may wonder what the fuss is about



Tekken, like *Ridge Racer* before it, has become synonymous with Sony's hardware. Expect Japanese consumer take-up for the title to be duly tremendous at the end of March

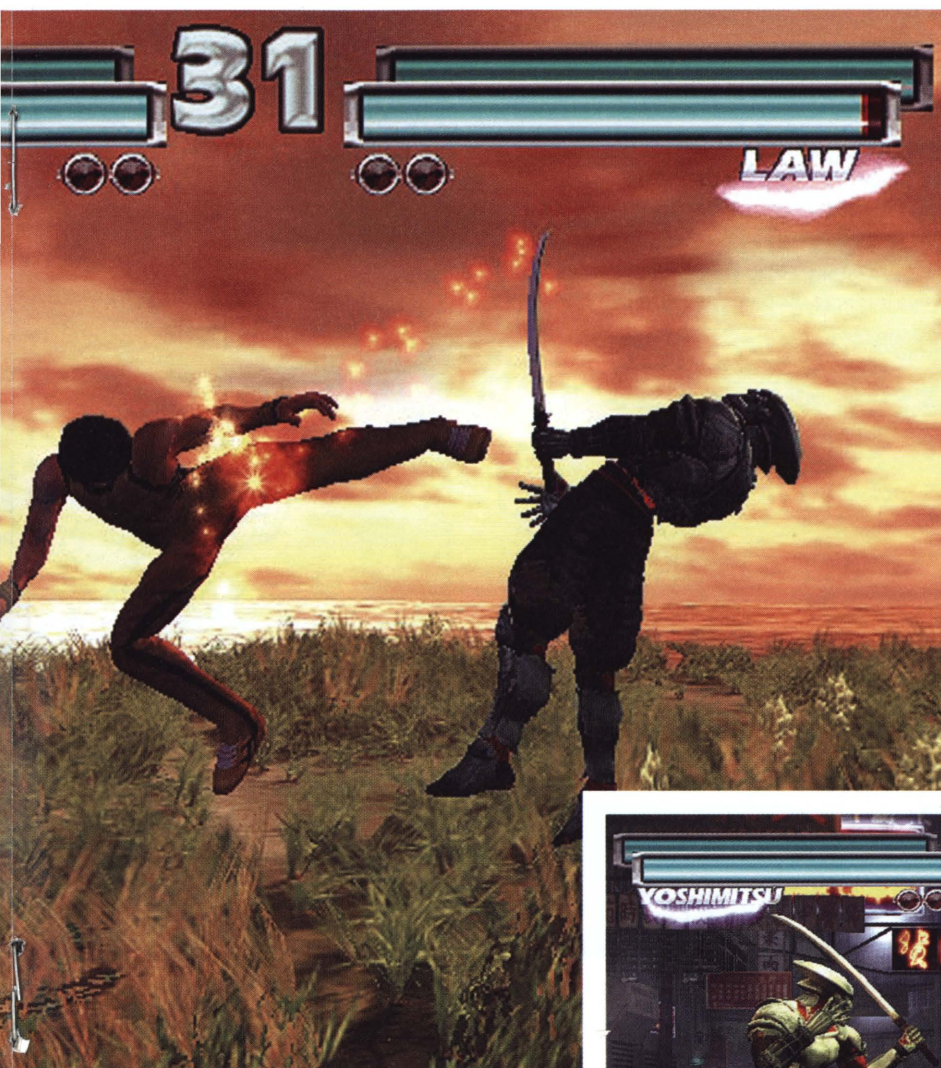
Predictably, this attracted a lot of attention. Predictably, it plays very much according to the *Tekken* school of beat 'em up design. Some of the characters and arenas look far better than others – Sumo man Ganryu appears rather shabby – but generally it looks the part, although it's worth noting that there's little here that *DC Soul Calibur* doesn't manage.

The play area has remained detached from the backgrounds, which is regrettable given the latter's occasional penchant for scrolling the wrong way during fights. And as far as **Edge** could tell, the analogue function of the Dual Shock 2 buttons was not used – the same amount of energy was taken off an opponent regardless of how hard the X button was being pressed. Isn't this something of a missed opportunity? Polyphony didn't waste any time in implementing the feature in *GT2000*.

But this is by no means a poor title. More than 20 characters from the previous three games appear. The Tag option introduces an extra level of tactical play (off-screen players slowly recover health taken off by the last received blow) as well as some impressive move combinations. Some will proclaim the latest gameplay twists to be a refreshing and entirely new experience. Others may simply perceive *Tag* as *Tekken* with prettier graphics. In a sense, both are right. Had the team benefited from a proper development cycle things would have looked a lot different. Of course, there's always *Tekken 5*.



Suffer a damaging impact and you'd be wise to swap your characters, allowing your injured fighter time to recover energy off-screen. It's one of several strategies



The game looks pretty in places, but with this *Tekken* Namco is not yet squeezing PS2 as it so famously did PS1. Of the three PS2 fighting titles, Tecmo's *Dead or Alive 2* beats them all (see news)

Fantavision

Publisher: SCEI
Developer: In-house
Release: Out now

Who said PlayStation2 titles were all about driving and fighting? SCEI injects some early variety into the PS2 portfolio with a hypnotic and likeable fireworks puzzler



In a kind of *Missile Command* in reverse, *Fantavision* has you selecting pyrotechnics thrown up into the night sky (above) to then be detonated in a colourful display (right)



Ask your friends to come round to play a fireworks simulator and chances are you'll spend the evening on your own, waiting for the doorbell to ring. Yet *Fantavision* isn't a fireworks sim. It's a puzzle game. And a fine one. Surrounded by sequels, sports games and mah jong titles, it's little surprise that this is one of the games Edge kept coming back to.

Truth be told, there is very little here that even begins to exploit the PS2's graphical power – the game could be adequately ported across to PS1 and few would notice the difference. True, some of the explosions during the bigger sequences are fantastically colourful bouquets of gunpowder, but you're likely to miss their real beauty for the concentration needed.

The game works thus: colour-coded fireworks go up into the night sky (played over animated cityscapes or even the world) and it's your job to come up with the most impressive display by linking as many of them together as possible. Think of a picturesque version of *Missile Command* with added strategic elements. There are rules, of course. You can't simply attach three green rockets together and then attempt to connect them to an orange one – you'll need to get a multicoloured version between them and move from one colour to another.

It sounds simple, and it is, at first. You can't wait too long before detonating your chain, though, as fireworks eventually die out. Yet the temptation to string on just another sequence proves dangerously strong. A bonus round allowing 100+ combinations becomes accessible once the letters S-T-A-R-M-I-N-E are collected.

Oddly hypnotic and scarily addictive, *Fantavision* truly is the surprise PlayStation2 package.



As you can imagine, this hardly pushes the PS2 to its limit, so the developer has included animated backgrounds



String enough fireworks together ensuring plenty of colour variety is included and take a couple of seconds to appreciate the sequence that results



While *Fantavision*'s early levels centre on firework displays with busy city backgrounds, later in the game the mood takes on a more intergalactic feel

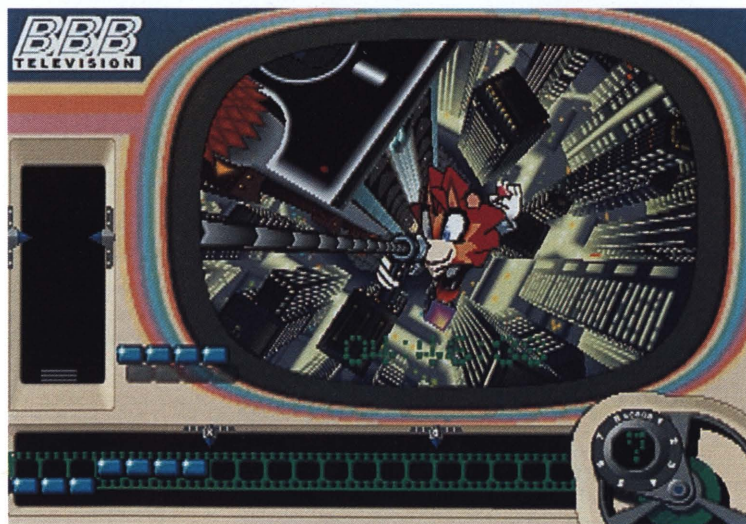
Be On Edge

Publisher: SCEI
Developer: In-house
Release: TBA

Another refreshing title amid an assault of sequels and copycat titles, this attractive-looking, SCEI-developed rhythm-action videogame could turn some players' heads



Rather than bash the buttons in the same sequence for every bar, variety is vital to the game



Not, as its title may suggest, a sim title requiring you to be part of a team putting together a multiformat videogame magazine, this is in fact a rhythm-action title.

Yet look under the surface and you'll see there is a little more to *Be On Edge* than that. The visuals are reminiscent of Sega's *Jet Set Radio* and as such are just as appealing. Your character, a cartoon James Bond-esque secret agent codenamed 777, must negotiate a series of situations with the help of your rhythmic skill.

You must fill empty music bars (of eight spaces each) scrolling along the bottom of the screen by pressing a combination of joystick buttons (the X button takes up four spaces, circle three, square two and triangle just one). Each offers a different musical characteristic and the better sequenced these are, the higher a power meter will rise.

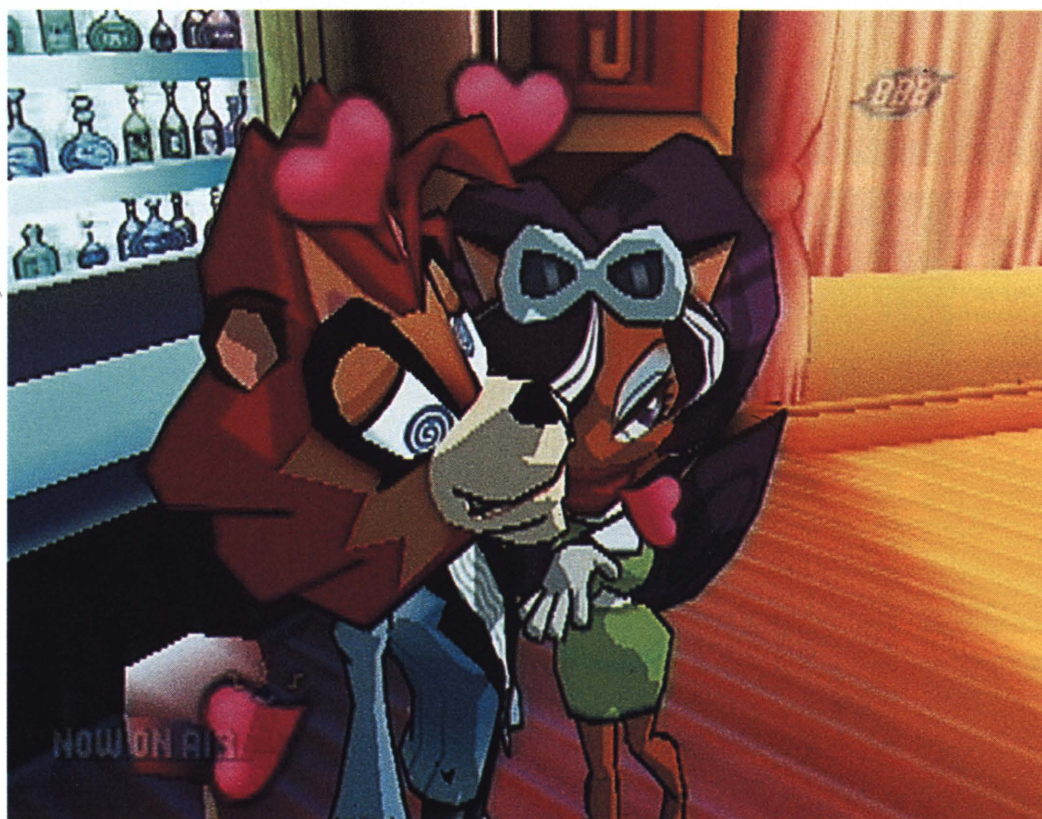
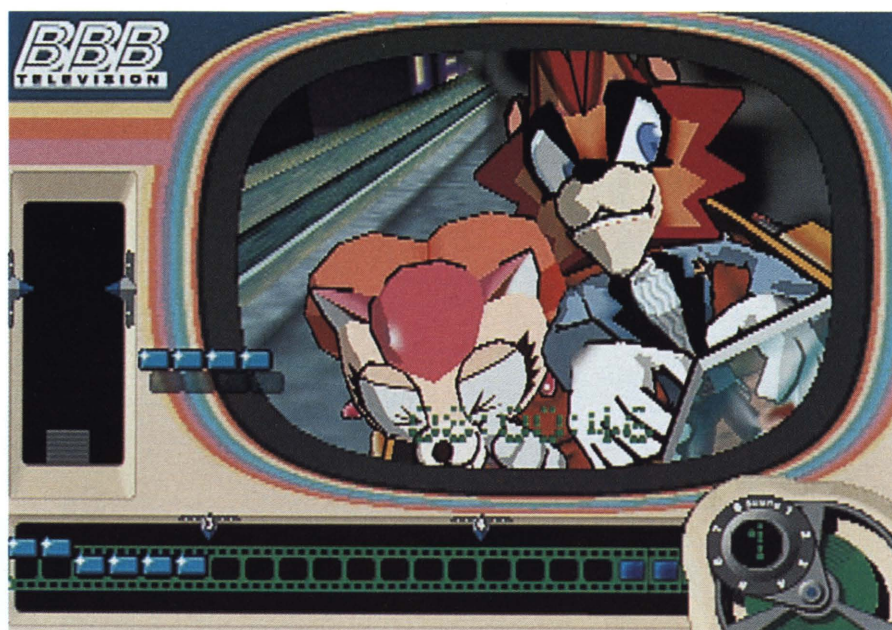
Successfully clear the last bar (which usually leaves you little time to work out the best way to fill the remaining gaps) with the power meter above the minimum point and 777 goes on to his next assignment. Fail to do so and it's back to square one, bearing in mind that a time limit is continuously running out.

Suffice it to say that under show conditions (even with Sony providing shoulder-mounted speakers at all of the *Be On Edge* stations) getting to hear your musical sequences was a little on the tricky side. However, there's likely to be real skill and reward in laying down scratches on top of the game's funky-up tunes. It will be crucial to try out the game again in a more sedate environment.





Agent 777 (above) is a likeable character, but as with most of these games, you have little time to focus on his actions. If you wish to complete the stage, that is



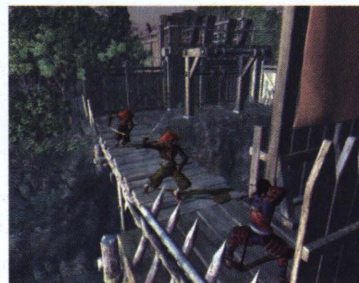
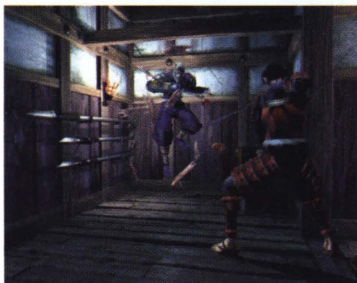
Onimusha

Publisher: **Capcom**
Developer: **In-house**
Release: **Summer**

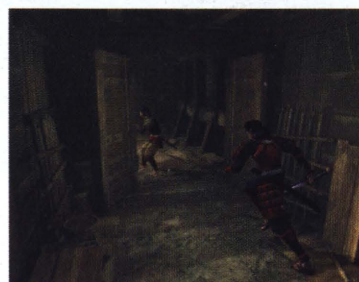
Feudal Japan has given developers a rich historic vein to tap and exploit over many years, yet few have thrown the undead into the mix. But then this *is* a Capcom game

O *nimusha* started life as a PlayStation1 title. It shows. Seen in video-only form, once the impressive CGI was out of the way, the in-game sequences bore a striking resemblance to *Resident Evil* PS games in terms of character animation, static camera placement and potential gameplay.

Admittedly, there are improved visuals and setting differences, but many showgoers hoped things would look more advanced. While time remains before the release date, visual improvements are unlikely. Behind the limited graphical presentation, however, Capcom's sound gameplay values should still flourish.



Polygonal characters moving over prerendered backgrounds see a return to the PlayStation1 *Biohazard* days with possible gameplay to match. Though mildly disappointing, visuals serve their purpose

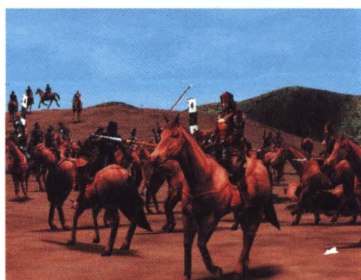


The setting may be medieval Japan, but unlike the historic *Kessen*, gameplay really centres on combat and location exploration rather than careful strategic planning

Kessen

With whole armies of men and horses made of generous polygonal detail, *Kessen* may attract as many as it will repel once its historical war sim theme sinks in

Publisher: Koei
Developer: In-house
Release: Out now



Kessen may manage many polygons simultaneously on screen, but their animation leaves a lot to be desired. Still, it's a far cry from most war sims

That a Japanese feudal war sim was always going to have limited appeal to a western audience is hardly a revelation.

Hence *Kessen*, with its heavy, menu-based system and drenching of historical references, proves mostly impenetrable for the average non-Japanese speaker. A little help from one of Koei's friendly PlayStation Festival representatives ensured some progress.

A lot of the game is spent in top-down distant view, showing the position of your army and the enemy forces, at which time decisions are made concerning your next move. Once the opponents are engaged and commands delivered, cut scenes depicting your actions kick in. You may, for example, instruct your archers to fire on charging horse riding samurai, or order a platoon to unload its muskets at enemy troops.

It's an engaging addition to the proceedings, made all the more so by the inclusion of gauges displaying both sides' remaining soldier totals. The numbers continually plunge as the fighting goes on. Tailoring your strategic approach to suit situations should ensure this never reaches single figures.

For fans of the genre – and there seemed to be an awful lot of them at the show – this is utterly compelling stuff. Granted, the animation is more than a little rough around the edges, but few will dare argue against the fact that *Kessen* takes its genre to a new graphical level. And war sim lovers may well wish for little else.



An accurate representation of a specific period in Japan's long and turbulent history will always appeal to a nation retaining a genuine sense of tradition and culture. Most things in *Kessen* are competent, though western audiences may miss the appeal of Koei's title



Evergrace

Publisher: From Software
Developer: In-house
Release: Spring

In a perfect world, all action RPGs would be a mixture of Square production values and Miyamoto's directional genius. But for every *Zelda* there is always an *Evergrace*



Expect to encounter a variety of creatures and a bounty of weapons on your quest. Mustering enough patience to track them all down may prove a lost cause, however



Despite showing much promise earlier in its development, it's difficult to come away from playing *Evergrace* with anything but disappointment written all over your face. It's a seemingly simple action-RPG affair with a reasonable amount of weapon choice, but frustratingly limited attack options.

As one of two characters (selecting between male or female) you fight your way through a reasonably detailed, if occasionally barren and distance-restricted environment. Some textures are on the simple side and graphical glitches exist, too.

Opponents usually generate around you; defeat them, pick up and equip anything they may leave behind, then continue your quest. The combat system uses a power bar which encourages you to pause momentarily between attacks to maximise damage; should you get hit, the power bar decreases, reducing the amount of HP sapping your character is capable of.

On a positive note, some of the lighting effects during battles are impressive, and the camera works particularly well. Action may become a little more addictive further on in the game, but on current form *Evergrace* pushes no envelopes.



Evergrace fails to do justice to its host hardware. It's one of a clutch of titles that look more like Dreamcast fodder

Eternal Ring

If you like your PS2 firstperson action adventures sparse on action and surprisingly unadventurous, From Software might have the game for you

Publisher: **From Software**
Developer: **In-house**
Release: **Out now**



From Software was an early PS1 supporter in Japan with the likes of *King's Field*, an unengaging RPG. Being early to market looks like being a mistake on PS2, too

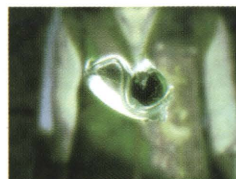
Eternal Ring transcends international borders, looking set to deliver medieval firstperson-perspective ennui on a worldwide scale. Little appears to have evolved since the game's last appearance at September's TGS.

The environments are barren, enemies are simple and uninspired, and they attack in the most predictable manner. Textures are mostly unadventurous and of a sort that wouldn't look out of place running on a mid-range PC. Effects such as its water ripples could probably be managed by 32bit machines. Furthermore, polygons have a tendency to warp, although some of the lighting fares better.

Late in the show demo, a boss-like monster crossed your path and proceeded to swing its long arms in your general direction in the faint hope of robbing you of some energy. Yet its movement was so contrived and sluggish that the resulting lifeless experience had most players giving up minutes into the battle. RPGs have rarely seemed this dull.



One of the game's bosses (main) appeared in the show demo. With predictable attack patterns and pace it was a pitiful sight



IQ Remix +

Publisher: SCEI
Developer: In-house
Release: Out now

The *IQ* team doesn't like to rock the boat. So it's little surprise to find its latest puzzling instalment retains all its predecessors' characteristics – even down to the visuals

One of two puzzle games adding a little variety to the Festival's main diet of racing and fighting titles, *Remix +* is a 128bit incarnation of the innovative and playable concept originally released for the Japanese PlayStation market back in 1997.

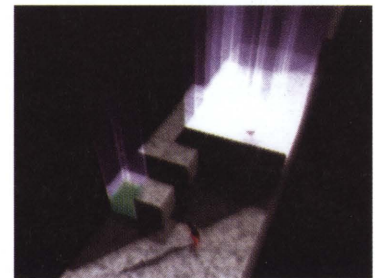
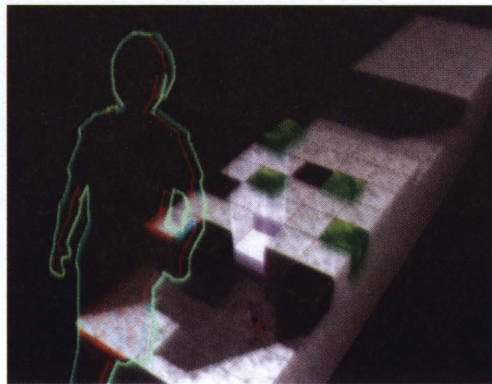
Perhaps wisely, the developer has decided against any radical visual change, instead maintaining the spirit of the game's 32bit predecessor. But that doesn't mean improvements haven't been made. The main character has undergone a massive graphical enhancement – he now runs around with a satchel, though its purpose appears only decorative. Also, the environment has been transformed, but to a lesser extent.

Motion blur permeates the action as if it's going out of fashion, and the previously predominant black background now benefits from a variety of dynamic images. Needless to say, neither affects the gameplay. Which is hardly what can be said about the simultaneous twoplayer mode. Similar to the oneplayer mode, it's your job to make your way through a barrage of advancing blocks before these either crush you or push you off the edge into oblivion. Some of them can be destroyed by detonation. The trick resides in selecting the right path through this relentless blockade.

There's nothing revolutionary about *Remix +*. Sure, new features have been implemented (a new maze mode and Forbidden Wall, to name two), and new in-game situations require seasoned *IQ* players to reassess their strategy, but you know pretty much what you're getting. No major surprises, then, which may well appease fans.



Remix + is the third instalment in the *IQ* series (the original and *IQ Final* graced the 32bit PlayStation line-up). But you'd be pushed to find anything that screams 'next generation' within its code. Still, the familiar gameplay shines through



The Forbidden Wall game (top) gives you little time to work out how to negotiate your way to the other side of a toppling block structure. It's a fairly tense affair. With other modes it's business as usual

Gekikokan Pro Baseball:

Along with mah jong titles and obscure puzzlers, baseball games have become the accepted console launch titles. They've never looked this dazzling, though

Publisher: Square
Developer: In-house
Release: March 30

At the End of the Century 1999

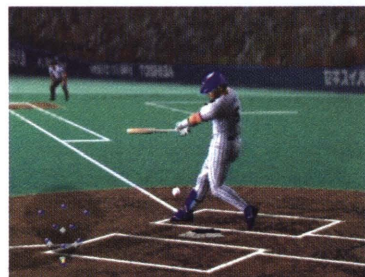
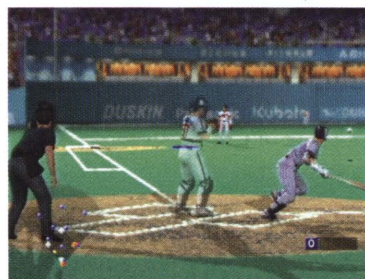
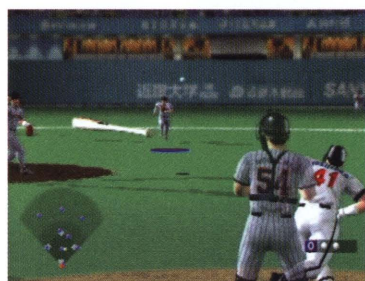
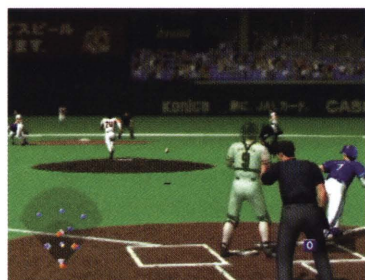
This is another of the Festival titles that can be termed next generation. Square's game looks absolutely sensational.

It's chiefly an issue of animation. Idiosyncratic detail for each player has been included so that each has his way of stepping up and preparing to bat. It's packed with detail – a rotund player's shirt develops fat folds as the character bends forward to swing, while others dust themselves down after diving for a base plate.

Unfortunately, though, bats fail to convincingly connect with the ball. Similarly, catchers don't always get their gloves exactly in the path of the ball yet appear to magically scoop it into their grasp. Furthermore, given the graphical excellence elsewhere, the 2D crowd is disappointing. And it shouldn't be forgotten that, at the end of the day, it's still just a baseball game. **E**



The amount and quality of animation is unprecedented in a sports videogame. Each of the players has his own personal repertoire when it comes to batting. The entire game is drowning in realism



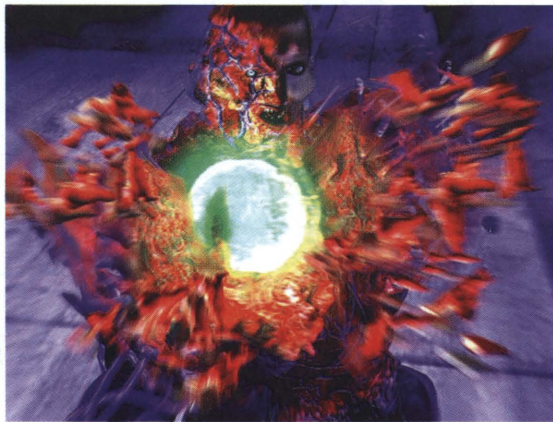
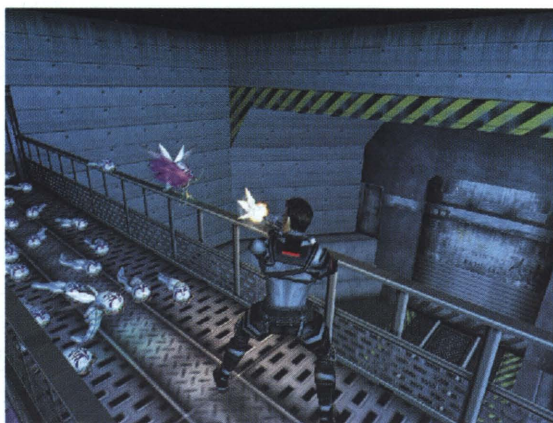
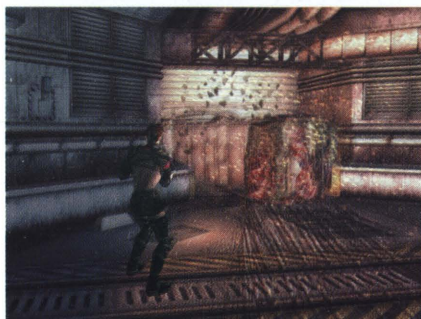
At the PS Festival, Square showed real baseball footage for comparison purposes

Round-up

Extermination

Shown amid plenty of CGI sequences and dubbed a 'panic action' title by its developer, this looks more like a poor survival horror action game which would currently seem more at home on PS1 (where *Biohazard* would probably ensure it would go unnoticed).

Other than passable visuals and dreadful animation touches such as bullet casings flying out of machine guns, your character mutates into a hideous beast at some point in the game. How this will affect things remains to be seen. Let's hope that Deep Space (an SCEI internal studio) will be allowed enough time to turn this into a true next-generation title. Visually, at least.



Publisher: SCEI
Developer: Deep Space Inc
Release: TBA

It may look interesting here, but Deep Space's 'panic action' title is rough around the edges

Jikkyou World Soccer 2000

Rumours at the show suggested Konami's Major A division (responsible for the N64 *ISS* interpretations) has based this PS2 incarnation on ported 64bit code.

It would go some way to explaining why this 128bit version is looking on the lame side, to say the least. The animation needs serious attention – players jerk their way from one sequence to the next, resulting in the least fluid Konami football title seen in many years. The knock-on effect is that playability, the hallmark of the *ISS* series, dramatically suffers. There also appear to be failings in the game's AI. Overall, Konami has a lot of work to do to make this anything other than a significant failure.



Publisher: Konami
Developer: In-house
Release: Spring

Word has it EA's PS2 *FIFA* title is far superior to Konami's effort. That would be a first

DrumMania

Continuing a devotion to rhythm-action entertainment, Konami unveiled its home interpretation of its coin-op drumming experience for all aspiring Tommy Lees.

The higher-than-average price (¥13,800 – approx. £80) includes a proprietary controller that replicates a mini drumming station, although the kick-drum pedal is rather flimsy. The visuals could have done with a revamp, to bring *DrumMania* more in line with other PS2 titles, but time constraints intervened.



Publisher: Konami
Developer: In-house
Release: Out now

Other than a stubborn kick drum pedal, this is as close as you'll get to owning the coin-op

Snowboard SuperCross

Every show has its dog, and the PlayStation Festival's was *Snowboard SuperCross*. Even if you somehow managed to ignore its appalling frame rate problems due to its unfinished state (bear in mind the game's proposed spring release, though), there were still plenty of problems with EA Canada's entry into the PS2 market.

The dynamics, though partly affected by the wildly varying update rate, still disappointed, with a rough-and-ready approximation of the real thing – hardly the intuitive approach taken by *1080°*, for example. Visually, despite a flurry of activity such as fireworks lighting up the night sky, there was little here that stressed Sony's Emotion Engine.

Still, the game promises to offer a bunch of varied gaming modes (some of them reasonably original – for a snowboarding title) to go alongside its nine tracks come release. Final judgement should therefore be reserved until then.



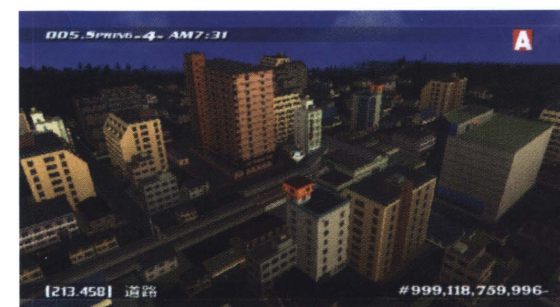
Publisher: EA Square
Developer: EA
Release: Spring

As it stands right now, there's little in *SSC* that existing snow-based titles haven't done

A6

Though Edge freely admits to not getting into a lather by the prospect of Artdink's train management games, this sixth instalment certainly looks the most accomplished of the lot. But then anything less would have stood out sorely.

A6 is hardly mind blowing, but that didn't appear to bother the hordes of punters lining up to have a go at laying down tracks at the Festival. Once a new rail system is established there's nothing to stop you taking a ride along with the train to check out the scenic route in realtime 3D. It's a particularly comprehensive package that's sure to delight fans of digital train sets.

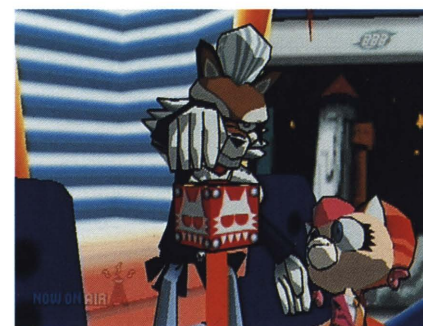
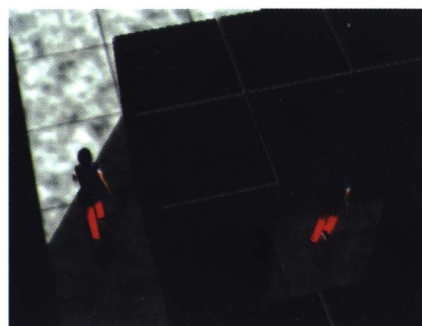
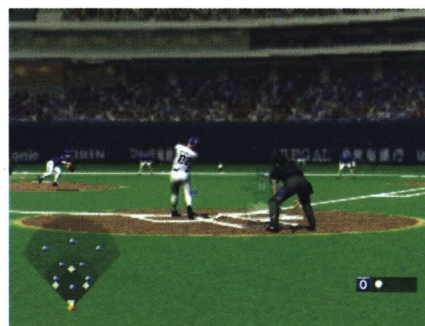
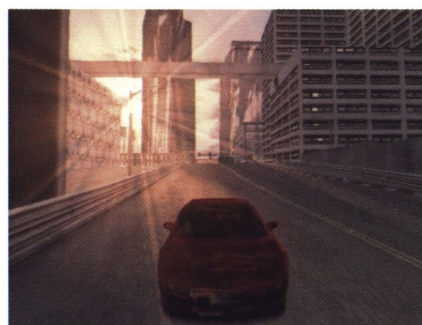
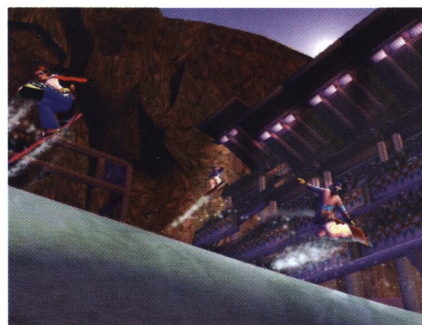


Publisher: Artdink
Developer: In-house
Release: Spring

The clear benefits of PS2's 3D grunt may give Artdink's series a wider than normal audience

THE FUTURE OF INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT

UK EDITION APRIL 2000



PS2